

Assemblymember Christine Kehoe



Brings You News
From Sacramento

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Assemblymember Christine Kehoe, Speaker Pro Tem Designate

Budget News – The Campaign to Save California

You may have seen the local news coverage of my visits this week to the San Diego City Council and to other local officials. That was my contribution to the effort to let San Diegans know the severity of our budget crisis.

As we near the June 30 budget deadline, the choice is clear. Republicans and Democrats need to work together to embrace a balanced approach - one that includes more program cuts and new sources of revenue.

Unfortunately, the Legislature remains badly divided over California's budget solutions. Some lawmakers want you to believe that we can make cuts without consequences.

The truth is that it takes money to pay for health care, education, to pave city streets, to pay for police officers and firefighters, and a decent quality of life for our senior citizens.

In the good times before the national recession, California invested in its schools, health care, and local public safety. We put more cops on the street, and provided care for sick children. We reduced class size, bought modern textbooks, and added new testing and teacher accountability in our schools.

We also cut taxes. We cut sales taxes. We cut vehicle license fees. We provided tax credits to businesses to improve the economy and create new jobs. In all, the California Legislature has returned nearly \$26 billion to taxpayers.

But the national economic downturn has created budget shortfalls in 47 states – and the stock market decline triggered the steepest drop in state revenues in California history. Even after making \$12 billion in cuts and other savings, we still face a deficit of \$26 billion.

We're working hard in the Legislature to get ourselves out of this fiscal crisis. *We have already cut every major area of the budget, scaling back spending to 1999 levels.* We cut more than 1 billion

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dollars from health and social services - cutting cancer research, limiting dental care to seniors and eliminating outreach to uninsured children. We've cut every area of state operations, from forestry to prisons to environmental protection. And we've cut billions in education - reducing funds for classroom materials, teacher training, adult education and eliminating reading tutors for children who are falling behind. However, we can't rely on program cuts alone.

Without reasonable sources of new increased revenues, there *will* be fewer cops on our streets, shorter library hours, firehouses without the equipment they need, and closed health clinics and trauma centers.

The people of this state expect us to pass a budget with a balanced approach. Of course, no one wants to pay more taxes. But Californians want decent schools, decent health care and a decent chance that when they call for a cop, one will be there. Please know that you have friend in Sacramento who is working with the other legislators on a balanced approach, to save California's future.

Please let me know where you stand on this important issue!

Why do Californians Pay so Much for Gasoline?

Gas prices in California are higher than anywhere else in the United States. In my district, I have heard over and over, everywhere I go, that the Legislature needs to act. Gasoline prices are just too high.

This year, prices have soared, reaching more than \$2.15 per gallon in most California cities. There was a brief dip in prices, but now we're seeing them rise again. Prices have been rising continually since early June and are more \$1.80 for unleaded regular statewide.

When California's gas prices reached a high in March of this year, the Attorney General, Members of Congress, the California Legislature, and the Governor all called for immediate investigations of collusion, price gouging, and other unsavory business acts.

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In March, the California Energy Commission came out with their initial report – which found no evidence of business wrongdoing. They also found that they do not have complete information and really are in no position to reach many conclusions. They continue to monitor the situation, but recommended that the oil industry begin providing more information to the Commission on a weekly basis.

As a result of that report, I introduced a bill (AB 1340) to require the oil industry to begin reporting specified information to the Energy Commission on a weekly basis. This will assure that in times like these, the Commission has all the information it needs to determine the causes of price increases.

Californians pay 30 to 40 cents more per gallon of gasoline than motorists in other states. Some say that it is because of California's reformulated fuel requirements. Some say it is because of California's tight environmental laws and low refinery and storage capacity. Others say it is simply because there is no competition. Six oil companies control 93 percent of the motor fuel consumed in California. The oil industry in California owns and operates the lion's share of retail gasoline stations and sets prices for all retailers.

This bill does not seek to solve the problem. It only seeks to enable the Energy Commission to collect better data and give us more information. With that information, we can better determine why Californians consistently pay the highest prices in the nation. This bill has passed the Assembly, and most recently passed the Senate's Energy Committee. I have requested to chair the Select Committee on Gas Pricing and hold hearings soon in Northern and Southern California. I'll keep you informed of our progress.

For more information on this bill, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov and search by bill number, author, or keyword.

Volunteer Spotlight – North Park Res. Lorraine Halac

Lorraine Halac, a long-time North Park resident, really knows how to give back to her community. Halac, who has lived in North Park since 1967, is an active community member who served the North Park Community Association (NPCA) as their Secretary for the past four years, as well as the Secretary of their History Committee for the past eight years.



She also chaired the NPCA's annual Dumpster Day / Alley CleanUp and the Klicka Scholarship programs for several years.

Lorraine's connection and commitment to North Park goes back many years. During World War II, she worked at the North Park Theater, and the North Park home she and her husband live in has been in their family since 1930.

Where is the San Diego River?

The San Diego River runs from Julian to Ocean Beach – however, many San Diegans don't even know where it is. Over the past few years, community members, and city and state officials have been looking at what can be done to turn this river into one of our city's educational and recreational destinations. Because the river is in such need of attention, last year I authored legislation which created the San Diego River Conservancy.

I recently joined Mayor Dick Murphy as he unveiled signs to mark where the San Diego River is. This is an important step in allowing San Diegans to recognize and know the San Diego River and mark its course through Mission Valley.

I look forward to many more projects that will enhance the river and the enjoyment of San Diegans that will come as result of the work of the San Diego River Conservancy.



Governor Gray Davis recently announced the appointments of James Bartell, and Dr. Susan Hector as members of the San Diego River Conservancy Governing Board.

Mr. Bartell spent 22 years as a city councilman in Santee, seven years as chief of staff to the County Board of Supervisors and eight years as the chief of staff to a United States Congressman. Dr. Hector worked for San Diego County in the Parks and Recreation Department from 1989 to 2001 including service as director from 1999 to 2001. She is currently on the Board of Directors for the Presidio Park Council, the San Diego Archaeology Center and the Save our Heritage Organization. Dr. Hector and Mr. Bartell will be great resources for the Conservancy.